

Daniel P. Keenan, DVM
Ron McAlister, DVM
Lynsey D. Makkreel, DVM



NAIL 'BIND' AND NAIL 'PRICK'

When a farrier shoes a horse, accurate placement of each nail through the insensitive epidermal laminae of the hoof is essential. The nail must penetrate deep enough to hold firm, but not deep enough to penetrate the sensitive laminae of the hoof. If it does, pain, infection and lameness can result.

What are 'nail bind' and 'nail prick'?

Nail 'bind' is a term used to describe an accident where the nail has been driven too close, whereas nail 'prick' is used where the nail has been driven through the sensitive lamina.

How can 'nail bind' and 'nail prick' be diagnosed?

Lameness occurs, usually not immediately, but the next day or sometimes even the next week after shoeing. There is an increased pulse felt in the palmar digital arteries at the horse's heel. There is pain on the application of hoof testers directly over the head of the offending nail. The horse may resent removal of the offending nail.

How can 'nail bind' and 'nail prick' be treated?

The shoe should be removed, any pus drained, and the nail hole flushed. A poultice should be applied to the foot to help draw the abscess. In simple cases, this usually produces rapid relief.



Farrier nailing on a shoe

In severe cases or for those who have not received early diagnosis and treatment, infection may track under the sole, or even track up to and burst out from the coronary band. In such cases, local resection (surgical removal) of the necrotic sole and/or wall, and a course of antibiotic treatment may be necessary. Once the horse is sound, with no discharge from the nail hole, careful re-shoeing may be resumed.

How can 'nail bind' and 'nail prick' be prevented?

Make sure that your horses' feet are regularly trimmed and shod, by a competent farrier, who will do his best to ensure accurate nail placement. Nevertheless, accidents will occasionally happen and are usually quickly overcome provided the horse received early diagnosis and treatment.

Caution

Specific nutritional supplements may help to encourage good horn quality, helping the farrier to achieve accurate nail placement. Feed supplements containing zinc, biotin and methionine may help to aid good quality hoof growth, especially for those horses with naturally brittle feet. Those with naturally brittle feet may also benefit from being fed gelatine.